



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

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# News Release

## **ICE AGENTS RETURN \$16,000 TO CHEROKEE VILLAGE RESIDENT**

*- International telemarketer fraudsters targeted the elderly-*

CHEROKEE VILLAGE, Ark.—A 93-year-old victim of a fraudulent telemarketing scheme has received an unexpected return of \$16,000 from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) special agents. The money was returned to the victim's family today.

The fraudulent telemarketing scheme was uncovered through an international law enforcement program entitled Project Colt. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police and US federal law enforcement agencies involved in this initiative have targeted Canadian-based fraudulent telemarketing schemes.

Project COLT was formed in the 1990s to combat telemarketing fraud in both countries. Project COLT includes the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, ICE, the FBI and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, among other law enforcement and government agencies.

"This case is a perfect example of the outstanding cooperation between ICE, RCMP, U.S. Postal investigators and the FBI," said Michael A. Holt, special agent-in-charge of ICE in New Orleans. "Because of this cooperation, fraudulent telemarketers and other criminals are discovering how difficult it is for them to hide their illegal activities from law enforcement authorities. We are dedicated to identifying and dismantling these types of criminal operations wherever and whenever we find them."

Fraudulent telemarketers represent themselves to victims as lawyers, government officials, police officers, accountants or lottery company officials. The victims are told that they will receive a sum of money varying from thousands to millions of dollars in lottery winnings. Many times, the targets of these schemes lose their entire life savings.

The Project COLT Unit consists of law enforcement officers who intercept funds (usually bank drafts and cashiers' checks), so they can be recovered and ultimately returned to victims.

Project COLT officers also work to prevent further victimization both through public education and the prosecution of those who commit the fraud. Project COLT members also have formed partnerships with Canada Customs and Revenue, Canada Post Corporation, Federal Express, Purolator, United Parcel Service, DHL and other companies to assist with fund interception and return.

ICE encourages the public to call the toll-free Project COLT hotline at 888-495-8501.

ICE's Little Rock office will pursue further investigation based upon evidence obtained from the victim's residence.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*